THE INTERACTION OF SCHOOL AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT*

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IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE with a group that believes that adolescence is a period of potential and growth rather than, as I have heard it put in other settings, that kids during this age period simply exist in a pubescent purgatory, having been mugged by their hormones.

In 1986 David Hamburg, at the Carnegie Corporation, convened the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. One of its first missions was to give focus to the impact of schools on students 10 to 15 years of age. The result was the release of *Turning Points* in June 1989. For those of you who have not had the opportunity to read it, do so. I will use *Turning Points* in the first part of my comments as my text. It describes very well the character of the middle grade school that must exist to meet the needs of young people 10 to 15 in ways described by the preceding speakers.

We began our work on *Turning Points* from two premises central to any meaningful school change. The first is that all kids can learn at high levels. A lot of people think that premise is nothing more than throw-away pablum for political speeches. I argue that we must adopt that perspective as an operating principle in all that we do.

If we really operated on that principle, we would, for example, eliminate from schools across the United States the practice of tracking, of dividing kids into blue birds and vultures and then having the youngsters persist in those roles throughout their school careers. I note, not incidentally, that later on more vultures drop out of school than blue birds. We end up surprised by that even though we set the expectations, within the policy framework, that contribute to that result.

The other of these premises that serves as a beginning point is that not only can all kids learn, but we basically know how to teach them successfully. It is not a matter of discovery. There are, across the United States, many examples of effectively teaching all manner of kids whether they are poor, disabled or have a first language other than English.

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These were two fundamental premises as we began. We also thought it important to envision what the youngster at age 15 should look like. We described the student in five ways. The individual should be intellectually reflective; en route to a lifetime of meaningful work; and engaged in expressions of good citizenship, responsible for shaping his world and aware not only of one's life at home but possessing a sense of global citizenship as well.

The fourth characteristic we envisioned was that the individual be caring and ethical. We believe there is good and bad in the world and it is possible to tell the difference between the two. Our perspective is that schools have to abandon the moral eunuch status they have assumed in recent years as they have been fearful of lawsuits and subject to other inhibitions. They have too often declined to address issues of caring and right and wrong and reaching out to other people.

The fifth characteristic we envisioned was that each be physically and mentally fit. In summary, we envisioned our 15-year-old as a thinking, productive, caring, and healthy person who took seriously the responsibilities of good citizenship.

We then examined how we were doing in the schools of the United States. The answer is that we are generally doing a miserable job. I do not say that from a school-bashing perspective. The evidence shows that we are doing as good or better a job today than 25 years ago, when the dropout rate, for example, was 50% and many of those youngsters were non-English-speaking kids and poor and black. But the issue is not an issue of today versus 25 years ago. The issue is the gap that exists between what is today and what has to be today.

If we were still a manufacturing and agricultural economy, the product of the schools would be pretty good. If Japan and Germany were still our defeated enemies and not our competitors and allies, the product of the schools would be pretty good. But the world has changed and schools have not. In fact, schools are too much like they used to be. They have not altered how they do business to yield a different product.

The 10-to-15-year-old, as all of you know from the research that has been presented here this morning, needs a sense of belonging, of intimacy, some sense of security, of knowing success, of having adults around them that care. Too many of our schools across the United States for kids who are 10 to 15 are, instead, warehouses. They are warehouses of mass movement every 45 minutes from one place to the other. Students must make sense somehow of relating to 150 to 200 other children during the day as they move from one class to the other. They must relate to six or eight teachers. If one wants a

little guidance, he finds a counselor with as many as three to five hundred other kids for whom the counselor also has responsibility.

Against that backdrop, I share with you six elements from *Turning Points* that frame a vision of a middle level school that would make sense for youngsters 10 to 15. The first relates to governance and organization. There are several tenets within that framework. One is the idea of a school within a school. The fact is that these kids ought to be in schools where there are no more than three or four or, at most, 500 other students instead of the 1,200 and 1,500 and 2,000 and 2,500 warehouses that many youngsters attend.

Within the schools or even the schools within schools, the notion of teaming is a very important one. Teachers must not retreat behind closed classroom doors. All staff must communicate with one another.

Many schools report that they have teams. Recently, one survey discovered that about 40% of the teachers were organized into teams. However, when they were asked the question, "How many of you have as much as one hour a week in which you can meet together," the number dropped to 11%.

The fact is that teaming in most places is little more than a list of people on a piece of paper in the principal's office. It is not a practice of actually engaging with other professionals and having the time to do that in a problem-solving way. Such engagement and interaction is important on the academic front and in the context of connection to the community and the home by the school team.

We recommend small group advisories in the schools, that each child have an advocate, somebody with whom to connect, somebody to get up every morning consciously thinking, "I wonder how so and so made it during the night," or, "I wonder how today is going to go." Some sense of direct adult/student connection rooted in a caring relationship is extremely important.

The second general area is the importance of a core academic program. We emphasize high expectations, high content, a strong emphasis on the sciences, on communications skills and mathematics. However, within the framework of traditional discipline areas we also attach importance to cross-cutting skills such as problem solving or critical thinking or integration of knowledge.

Curriculum ought to be developmentally based. There is a significant emphasis in *Turning Points,* for example, on introducing human biology during the middle grade years. Surely, if there are things that are developmentally appropriate for a student during that period of time, to which students are tightly connected, they must include the issues found in the life

sciences in human biology. *Turning Points* includes significant emphasis on human biology both in its own right and as an illustration of what we mean by a developmentally based curriculum.

Two other pieces of the core curriculum are given emphasis. One goes back to the issue of ethical decision-making, the caring individual. We suggest that a fully developed, integrated middle level school should include a strong universal program of community service. Recognition that there is a connection between themselves and others, that there is mutual responsibility is important for middle school students. Also rooted in community service or student service learning are a host of other values. Community service has the virtue of learning by doing rather than learning by hearing or learning by reading. It also has the virtue of avoiding some of the other more controversial elements of values education.

Finally, related to the core curriculum area, *Turning Points* places emphasis on health education. Health education cannot be simply an add-on, a tangential or a co-curricular activity. It needs to be a central part of school when a student is 10–15 years old.

The third area I would highlight is that if we are going to accomplish dramatically different outcomes, such as kids being able to think and write and do science and high level math, we are not going to accomplish that by teaching in the same way we teach today. Instructional practices have to change. We must change our practice of tracking and ability grouping. We must alter the fundamental expectation we have of many students. We must engage more in strategies such as cooperative learning or cross-age tutoring or peer tutoring, the kinds of strategies that take advantage of strong potential among and between kids themselves.

A rubric I find useful in thinking through pedagogical questions: ask *how* we are going to teach. Basically, we tend to rely on lectures and worksheets. Many other kinds of strategies are available. Ask *where* learning takes place. We basically adopt one strategy now. It is within the four walls of the classroom, within the schoolhouse. There are other options. For some students other options will be places that prove more successful with them than the traditional classroom.

Ask *when* learning takes place. At the moment we act as though there is a tablet on which it is written that learning can only take place 180 days of the year, from September to June, from Monday to Friday, from nine to three and in 45-minute blocks of time. The fact, of course, is that there are multiple other answers to the question when does learning take place.

Finally, *who* teaches? We now answer that in one way. It is the traditionally certified teacher. The certified teacher will remain a bulwark of good

teaching, but there are so many others who can join as supplemental teachers. Parents, mentors, people from youth serving organizations and, as I said with respect to cooperative learning, other kids themselves can participate in the act of learning in a creative and effective way.

Returning to the notion that all kids can learn at high levels, *what* kids learn must be basically the same in the sense of being commonly challenging. No more "dumb" stuff for the poor kids and good stuff for the other kids. But *how* they are taught and *where* and *when* they are taught and *who* teaches them ought to be the variables. The criterion for determining what answer ought to occur with respect to each of those questions is did it work? If it didn't work, then we don't quite have the right mix of answers.

When my own kids were in school—I have two boys, 22 and 24—they would come home sometimes and say to me with respect to a friend, "So-and-so has an attitude problem." Well, we have an attitude problem in the United States. If we encounter a youngster or a class or a school district of kids with whom we are being unsuccessful, our answer too often is that there is something wrong with the kid or there is something wrong with the family or there is something wrong with the community. We never say to ourselves that the problem may rest with the school, that we might have the wrong answer to the questions *how, where, when* and *who*.

We need to alter our attitude to say that until we get it right—and getting it right means success with the kids—that we continue to look for that mix of effective answers and for those partners that we can bring together to yield a positive result for *all* students.

The fourth of the issues I would mention is that if one is going to engage in significantly different kinds of practices, we must change teacher training both before entering into the practice and after in what is characterized as professional development.

Most teachers in middle grade education across the United States have either been trained as elementary school teachers or as high school teachers. They have not been trained with particular attention to the developmental characteristics of youngsters who are in the middle. As all speakers have pointed out and all the speakers will point out later on, it is crucial to connect kids with their developmental characteristics. But if the teachers don't know what the developmental characteristics are, it is going to be impossible to do that. Thus, teacher training must have a developmental focus.

We also need to put much more emphasis on a solid core of knowledge in the disciplines. We should require where we do not—and we do not in most states across the United States—that a teacher not only major in education but also major in at least one discipline area such as history or physics.

I also suggest that we need to practice "learning by doing" more. We need to emphasize earlier internships, practice teaching, engagement with kids and observation experience. We should consider more often kids and observation experience. We should consider more often what some would characterize as a paid internship for the first one or two years that one moves into teaching. Their "hands-on" experiences would make subsequent teaching experience more valuable, more effective, particularly if it is done in connection with a mentor/teacher.

The fifth of the areas of focus for us was a major emphasis on the health of the students. There were two major emphases. One was that the schools need to ensure student access to health services. That will differ from one community to the next. There may be some wealthy communities where the predominant strategy is to make sure that all the parents do in fact have Blue Cross/Blue Shield. But lots of places, such as my hometown of Baltimore, are going to have to rely on such strategies as school-based health clinics.

And the fact is that school-based health clinics should not continue to fall into the experimental or demonstration mode. We must move such initiatives to scale, a subject to which I shall return.

The second of the major emphases related to health is the framework of the schools themselves. We frequently do not have health-promoting environments in the school. We permit lousy nutritional meals in the cafeterias. We permit teachers to smoke. We permit middle level 10-to-15-year-olds to engage in interscholastic athletics, a practice many consider antithetical to good health and well-being. We send signals to kids that are contrary to good health practice. Unless we begin to practice what we preach, we will continue to be seen as hypocritical by the students themselves.

In my home state of Texas there are apparently middle level schools that "red-shirt" kids when they are in the seventh grade. Red-shirting is holding a kid back so that he will be bigger and beefier by the time he gets to high school and may help a sports team to a state championship.

I am not saying that every middle level school engages in unhealthy practices. I am suggesting that we have to examine within the schoolhouse the kinds of practices that relate to health if in fact we want to have the kids pick up on healthy practices.

The sixth focus is that good middle level schools must connect to the outside world more often. At the head of the line are families, the parental component. Even the most obvious commonsensical kinds of things need our attention. We frequently do not create a friendly environment within the school for parents.

When I first went to Maryland as state superintendent, I went into schools all over the state that had a sign on the front door that said, in effect,

"Warning: When you come into this building report immediately to the principal's office." There was a kind of intimidation about that. I understand the need for security. But I always said to people, not facetiously, that it seemed to me that it would at least be possible to say, "Welcome! Warning: When you come into this building report immediately to the principal's office."

There are many strategies one can use, such as school professionals visiting with parents and families, creating communications systems that have parents involved early in the problems of kids.

Beyond parents, there are many other institutions with which schools can engage as partners. I have in mind such youth-serving organizations as the scouts, girls' and boys' clubs, and the like. We must reach out to them as allies, not treat them as intruders or enemies.

Let me turn now to point out that every speaker has identified strategies that work. We actually know how to address many of our serious problems. It is not a matter of discovery. At the very least we know so much more about what works than we presently put into practice that to be totally focused on what we don't know is to miss the point.

Thus, along with what Dr. Haggerty said with respect to policy and politics, significant attention must be devoted to strategy. How do we make things that work happen? How do we make them happen in more than one school or in more than one little tiny group? How do we bring them to scale?

I think there are six basic strategies one uses to spread the use of successful practice. Three of them are arguably, pretty effective. The other three are, in my opinion, not very good.

One way that we frequently rely on is charismatic leaders. Unfortunately, they tend to die or go away after a little while. Thus, they are not a very stable source of widespread change.

A second way is through demonstration or pilot projects. We need demonstration and pilot projects. If we did not have them, we would not be able to say we know effective programs for kids. But a demonstration or pilot project without also using another strategy, to my knowledge, has never been brought to scale. When the money runs out or the charismatic leader leaves or whatever, the pilot tends to disappear.

A third way we sometimes try to move to scale is we try to buy change. If we had enough money this strategy probably would work. If we had all the money in the world, we might conclude that we could buy all the change we need. But the fact is, particularly in 1991, we don't have that much money.

A fourth way that has been used with some promise in some places is the collective bargaining agreement. It is a vehicle that can define relationships in the context of new roles and responsibilities long enough that some of the new

practices can begin to take effect. There are places such as Hammond, Indiana, Toledo, Ohio, and Rochester, New York where there are some good examples of the use of the collective bargaining agreement as a vehicle for fundamental structural change.

The fifth of these change strategies is legislation. We have used it frequently.

The sixth of these strategies is the lawsuit. I invite you to consider quite seriously suing the state. It has proved to be, under certain circumstances, a quite effective vehicle. Not always. None of these things are always effective. But there are days when I am convinced that we are not going to go to scale in using effective strategies unless we have in place enforcement that comes because somebody is making them do it through the courts.

So I invite you to bring or fund a good lawsuit. In the school area there are at least three or four prime candidates at the moment across the United States where we are only missing the several hundred thousand dollars that one costs.

If you have legislation, a successful lawsuit, or a progressive collective bargaining agreement, the issue is, what is their content? What do you fill them up with? Just filing a lawsuit or a piece of legislation, unless the content is right, does not mean anything.

Let me finish by suggesting at least seven things that need to be part of a piece of legislation or the remedy for a successful lawsuit.

First, we need to focus on outcomes. At the moment, schools are focused on process. We ask people in schools, "Did you do what they told you to do?" I would suggest to you that the right questions are, did it work? Can the kid in fact do science? Can he do math? Can he write? Can he think? Can he solve problems, integrate knowledge? Can he do the things, whatever they are, that the community determines are necessary to function effectively as workers and citizens.

Second, if we are to have high expectation outcomes of the kind that *Turning Points* suggests, one has to reduce our reliance on nationally normed multiple choice tests. If, for example, one is to determine whether a kid can write, one must have him write. He cannot take a No. 2 pencil and fill in a bubble and determine whether or not he can write. Some very interesting assessment strategies are being developed across the United States now—in California, Connecticut, Kentucky, and Maryland.

The third component is the one that normally is most controversial. It is the idea that if we are to really have an outcome system, we need to associate rewards with success and penalties with failure. The only people who face consequences right now for what goes on in school are the students. They fail, they get bad grades, they don't get to go to college, and so on. Superin-

tendents, principals, teachers, and others ought to begin to wrestle with the issue of consequences. Using the school as the unit of measurement, with emphasis on progress, education income and tenure should in part at least be determined by the success of the students in a school and district. Success should be rewarded; those having difficulty should be given significant assistance, and those who persistently fail should face sanctions. Moreover, "success" with the at-risk child should be a necessary prerequisite for rewarding the staff in any school or district.

The fourth of these elements—outcomes, assessment strategies, rewards, and penalties—is the idea that one must move decision-making down the bureaucratic pipeline into the schoolhouse. The tools of instruction—budget, personnel, curriculum, textbooks, disciplinary code—need to be in the hands of people who can be held accountable. There needs to be a commensurate relationship between accountability on the one hand and the authority to make decisions on the other. None of us want to be held accountable for things over which we have no control. On the other hand, if we have control, I would argue we do not really have a legitimate reason for denying accountability in the process.

The fifth element is professional development. If we are going to ask people to accomplish what has never been accomplished by doing things that we do not do routinely, we cannot simply send a memorandum out to staff saying, "We are pleased to inform you that you are part of an outcome-based, consequences driven, site-based managed system. Let us know how it comes out." The fact is that we have to come in behind those other components and provide the resources and support necessary to accomplish the ends we seek.

The sixth element is that we have to provide a quality, developmentally appropriate prekindergarten program for at least all poor kids in the United States. This element is not directly related to adolescence, but if we accomplish it will short circuit many adolescent problems. In fact, most of the non-poor kids attend pre-K now. But this is not true for low-income children.

Seventh, we have to reduce the health and social service barriers that impact on learning. Many educators object that health and social services are not part of their job descriptions. I am perfectly satisfied with the notion that the educators' job is to have their students be able to read, write, and do arithmetic. The only point I make is there are increasing numbers of youngsters with whom educators cannot do the job unless health and social service issues are addressed.

The only place that has adopted a piece of legislation that encompasses all seven of these elements is the state of Kentucky. It went into effect on July 13, 1990. It would never have been possible in Kentucky absent an extraordinary lawsuit and extraordinary court opinion, because we would never have kept

the legislature and governor talking to each other long enough to make it happen absent that kind of enforcement framework. The result is not in place yet. It is far too early. But the construct for putting all of those pieces together is there for your scrutiny.

To illustrate quickly, they have developed very high expectation outcomes. They are developing a substantial array of new assessment instruments. In the reward and penalty section, they have made the school the unit of measurement and focused on improved performance, thus creating a level playing field so that both the rich schools and the poor schools have a chance for rewards. In the reward and penalty setting, a school staff under the Kentucky law will be eligible for up to 40% of annual salary as a financial bonus.

At the other end of the spectrum, in a school in which there is a five percent or more decline in the proportion of successful kids, among other things, the tenure of all the staff in the school will be suspended, and they will be subject to dismissal. They are not talking about giving somebody a plaque or inviting them to the Rose Garden. They have designed substantive rewards and penalties in that process. It should also be emphasized that a school in trouble is eligible for significant assistance, both financial and technical.

Similarly, with decision-making and development, at the end of six years each Kentucky school will be governed by a school council. The level of professional development will increase substantially by the third year.

Kentucky became the third or fourth state to guarantee pre-K for their poor kids. On the health and social service front, they decided to provide a family resource center, modeled on the Connecticut model, in or near every elementary school with 20% or more poor kids. They also decided to have a youth service center of the kind described a moment ago by Ruby Hearn in or near every middle school and high school with 20% or more poor kids. This part of the initiative will move into place over the course of the next six years.

As a nation we face fateful choices. Historically, we have the economic luxury—never the moral luxury but the economic luxury—of throw-away kids. We just did not need them all. The economy's engine would continue to drive and purr along if we failed with many of them. The fact is that today we need them all from an economic point of view. The demographics are such that whether they are disabled or minority or poor, or their first language is not English, we have to figure out how to succeed with them. These are indeed fateful choices for the nation.

The interesting thing is—and it has been said over and over this morning—proved and promising solutions do exist. We do not lack the knowledge. What we need is the imagination and will to do the job.